

RECOLLECTIONS OF A READER.

BY CHARLES T. CONGDON.

III.

QUAKER LITERATURE.

THE HISTORIES OF SEWEL AND BESSIE—THE LIFE OF THOMAS ELLWOOD—THE MARRIAGES—THE EXPERIENCE OF SARAH GRUBB—THE TESTIMONY.

The Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, was like the Society of Jesus always a printing society. Soon after its establishment, it began to use the press, and during the political days in which it was, through continual persecutions, wrestling to existence, it sent out work after work, and resorted to publication quite as often as these, then being being Legion, who disagreed with it. The passion for beauty and truth was reflected in a passage where a Quaker could entertain one, for book-making. The great histories of the Society, Sewel and Bessie, stand upon the lower shelves of libraries, in the dignified form of folios. The first edition of Sewel was published in London in 1722, and was a translation by himself from the original Low Dutch in which he wrote it, and published it in that pleasant Elia essay entitled "A Quaker's Meeting." Bessie's "Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers," in two volumes folio, was published in London in 1733. This work has been found valuable by genealogical inquiries, &c. It is an index of over one hundred pages of names. Many an American who has drifted afar as possible from the Quaker society has been surprised to find in Bessie how his great-great-grandfather went to jail for the truth. The acknowledged and unacknowledged children of the Quaker meeting are much more numerous in this country than is usually supposed. Even in the Society itself there have been remarkable changes, so that we hardly know what Quakerism is exactly. There is no place to jail at any rate now. Nobody in present is persecuted for righteousness' sake. Nobody is locked up for his religious sentiments—much less to be scourged or hung—not have I ever met with any person, of whatever religious profession, who in my opinion, would have accounted the stake of the rack for it. Either the breed of persecutors is pretty much extinct, or the breed of martyrdom, let us hope that it is only the former which is.

The policies of Sewel and of Bessie are a little scarce, and indeed I have never seen them except in the cherished collections of Monthly Meetings. The "History of the People called Quakers, from their First Rise to the Present Time," by John Gough, in four volumes octavo, Dublin, 1789, is an excellent compendium, making less demand upon the reading faculty, and yet retaining much that is valuable and instructive. The author, the schoolmaster, as he writes a little like a schoolmaster, but he is earnest and honest and painstaking, and outside of George Fox's Diary there is no better account than that which the reader will find in Gough of the experiences and religious notions of the proto-Quaker—his examination before bugled instances of the peace and "magistrates principled against the belief of any supernatural influence." It was the doctrine of the Spirit, and the positive way in which a belief in it was announced, which led to special charges against the early Quakers of practising witchcraft. There was a priest in Wakefield who promulgated a ridiculous report that "George Fox carried bibles about him, and by making people drink thereof made them follow him." There was another, Mr. Bessie, whose report of which was that George "wrote down a great black horse, and was seen in one count upon his horse in one hour and in the same hour in another county three score miles off." For alleged offenses like this, George Fox was taken prisoner by Colonel Bicker in Leicester and sent up to London to be carried before Oliver Cromwell. There is a curious account of the interview between these two remarkable men, during which the Lord Protector used words which have often been quoted: "Come again to my house, for if that and I were but an hour of a day together, we should be nearer one to another," adding, "I wish you no more ill than I do my own soul." These are utterances of Oliver with which Thomas Carlyle, who has no great liking for Fox, hardly seems to know what to do with.

A curious and not very common Quaker book is "The History of the Life of Thomas Bessie" written by his own Hand, with a Supplement by J. W. (John Whitehead). All the bibliographies give the date of publication of this interesting work as 1714; but there was a second edition in that year. Ellwood died in 1713, and the book, I suppose, was posthumous; it is not at any rate in the catalogue given of books printed by him during his lifetime, which includes his well known poem of "David" (1712), and his "Sacred History of the Old Testament" (1709). Ellwood has found a place in literature, not through his original works, which are nearly if not entirely forgotten, but as that friend of Milton who suggested to the great poet the topic of "Paradise Regained." The story has too often been quoted to need repetition here, but what does the reader think of the costly opportunities suggested by this passage: "Thus, by the mediation of my friend Isaac Pennington, with Dr. Pasey, and of Dr. Pasey with John Milton, I was admitted into the service of the reverend Mr. Bessie, who was serving his master, at that time, at his house at Chalfont, in Buckinghamshire, and to his great astonishment found that the whole family, Isaac Pennington, the father-in-law, and all, had turned Quakers; Ellwood himself not having become 'converted.' He tells the story of his courtship and reception in this idyllic way, as follows:

"For a year I sought him, and at length found means to cast myself into the company of the daughter, whom I found gathering some flowers in the garden, attended by her maid, who was also a Quaker. But when I addressed myself to her after my accustom'd manner, with intention to engage her in some discourse, which might introduce conversation, on the foot of our forming acquaintance, though she treated me with a courteous mien; yet—as young as she was—the gravity of her look and behavior struck such an awe upon me that I found myself not so much master of myself as to pursue any further converse with her. Therefore, asking pardon for my boldness in having intruded into her private walks, I withdrew, not without some disorder (as I thought at least) of mind."

I am happy to say that afterward Thomas Ellwood won an excellent wife in Mary Ellis, in whom, as he assures us, he found "a sublime virtue." I do not know anything in Quaker books more curious than the Quaker courtship, and especially so in the way in which the important question was asked. I am compelled to go through the sober documents in a heap of friendly biographies before me, and tell how these pure-minded and conscientious men wood and won their fair loves, who would not for the world have been called ladies. They are so serious and frank, these Quaker Romeo's! There are no flames, sighs, amours, and darts, but, though everything is stated in a matter-of-fact way, yet one feels, as he reads, a thrill of tenderness in the plain records. The hymenial story of Thomas Chalkley, as he narrates it, is a good specimen of it:

"In this year I thought it my place to enter into a married state; and I acquainted my father of my design, and that I inclined to make choice of Martha Betterton, a religious young woman, whom I entirely loved for that purity, virtue, and modesty which I beheld in her. I was in the twenty-fourth year of my age, and she in her twenty-first. I like wise acquainted her father and mother with my intentions. So after consultation of parents, we proposed our intentions of marriage to the Monthly Meeting to which we belonged." They were married "at noon on a appointed for that end," and "a day of day," says Friend Chalkley, "it was to my soul, when I was made sensible of the love and goodness of God, a particular manner, which to me was an earnest of our future well-being." In the "Journal of John Scott," an American Friend, is a love letter which he wrote to his betrothed, "just after Mr. Scott," a friend of mine, "had written to me." His address to her was "so full of warmth in a fresh spring of that love which I feel increasing, and hope may never wax cold towards

thee, and having felt thee abundantly near this evening, I am free to write what revives for thy perusal, hoping it may be useful towards our rightly stepping along through time together."

The reader of the English comedy, as and after the Restoration, will know how shameless the men and particularly the women of the Society of Friends are. Indeed it is not venture to suppose that I should be ashamed to give my readers a line from "The Fair Quaker of Deal." All the caricature, all the canting talk about the influences of the Spirit, all the intimations of overworldly piety, all the suggestions of sancteness, are absolutely without foundation. Yet so completely did this misrepresentation obtain place in the English mind that after two centuries of the sweetest and cleanest of religious history, there are people in plenty to-day who suppose that Friends, as a rule, are over sharp and self-seeking, if not worse than Asa Lord Macaulay could not get away from the prejudices, and the few passages in his "History of England" which do not stand the test of scholarly criticism, relate to the Quakers, of whose society, in his youth, I suppose that the historian had more than he related.

Ellwood's Life is written without much of the technicalities of the set. His is the general tone, but not the physiognomy. It is free from what others may be constrained the disdaining of a darf, but has the grain of reticulation in themselves. Have the habit of hasty memoranda, and must be carefully collated if we will get character out of them. Something, perhaps, I should say of this Quaker phraseology. The different books are alike in exquisite simplicity, in an engaging verbal *élan*, and in an abandonment to the movements of the Spirit, which it is not easy in modern times to understand, and much less to appreciate. In some respects our journal is like another, and is only those who read carefully and look closely into the narrative who can see any difference between one Quaker book and the next which is taken up. Many of these interesting works begin with the story of early conversion, and this none of these confessors tells more agreeably and tenderly than Edward. Yet those who were "lost in the mazes" as the phrase is, seem to have had a strong hold of them, of them to once Fox himself. Friend Chalkley, who was born in Southgate, England, in 1675, of Quaker parents, recollects

that when he was a child he was much more numerous in this country than is usually supposed. Even in the Society itself there have been remarkable changes, so that we hardly know what Quakerism is exactly. There is no place to jail at any rate now. Nobody in present is persecuted for righteousness' sake. Nobody is locked up for his religious sentiments—much less to be scourged or hung—not have I ever met with any person, of whatever religious profession, who in my opinion, would have accounted the stake of the rack for it. Either the breed of persecutors is pretty much extinct, or the breed of martyrs gone. Let us hope that it is only the former which is.

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During his address to the jury, he gave proof of his great eloquence, and language, and wit, and poesy. He held his audience spellbound. He pointed out from books bearing on the matter of communication, told stories of cases of disorder that were serious or fatal in their issues. Throughout his long address, the same stillness pervaded the courtroom, crowded to its utmost capacity.

was exonerated; the Courts at that time deciding that a lost or destroyed will could not be probated. Mr. De la Croix became a purchaser of a large plantation and slaves belonging to Clarke's succession. The title to this property would be invalidated by the probate of the lost or destroyed will. The testimony of the venerable gentleman was the principal of not only the living witness of the action, but also of the deceased, and the infirmities and the ruined consequences to himself, the chivalric old Frenchman did not suffer or shrink from depositing, as he had done for forty years before, to the solemn circumstances of his last interview with his old friend, when in full view of death. Clarke impressed upon his faith and tenderness, and his desire to provide for the interests of his, Clarke's, recognized child. The theory of the party who resisted the probate of this will was that Clarke, subsequently to its execution, consulted an eminent civilian of our bar, who advised against the legality of its provisions, and that he had withdrawn his support of it.

But this and all the other theories of the non-existence or destruction of this will have been determined to be untrue, and Mrs. Games has been recognized as the heir to Daniel Clarke under a will proven by the gentleman who was perhaps the first and largest loser therefrom.

This trial, suggested by the recent death of the author, Daniel Gough, only one of a hundred other like incidents which, together, render the litigation presented for nearly half a century by the marvellous little lady plaintiff one of the most thrilling, romantic, and interesting which ever came before the courts of justice.

A GIRL'S LOVE-SONG.

It was an April morning
When the birds were out;
The wind had never a warning,
The sky had never a doubt;
Fair and festive flocks
Flitted over thought and speech;
Hopes were hanging in clusters,
A little out of reach.

He wandered, he and no other,
Down by the little white brook;
The sunbeams sang one to another,
"A king is coming! Look!"
The brook said, coming and creeping,
"Peep, and you shall see!"
Through the leaves he went peeping,
And there he saw me.

Saw me, took me, crowned me,
There as I stood in my shyness;
I knew that he had found me,
Before he knew my name.
I went as I was fairest,
Fair with hand and surprise;
A week and a day I waited
Before I saw his eyes.

I had never a whisper
For all the words he said;
But the brook was a pleasant lisper.
It talked to him instead,
Brook, you told my secret;
Hearing him plumb his nose;
Brook, you have not a notion
What I feel for him now!

RUFUS CHALCOTE IN THE COURTHOUSE.

From The Chalcoite.
Mr. Chalcoite always endeavored, if possible, to make his speech before a jury without an adjournment of Court intervening. He preferred to say all he had to say at one sitting, as his arguments were to be carried in the mind throughout his whole speech. He knew when to stop. He knew in just what condition of mind to leave his jury, and when to return. He would then call for a small audience to address himself to an individual who could understand, till he had secured his attention, continually varying his moods to suit the temper of his audience. He related stories of the freaks of sycophants. When he was wrestling with a stronger fellow, telling him that his arguments were violent, he seemed beside himself, and as he came down with a thud upon his heels, he carried the impression to the hearts of the jury that he himself felt the truth of what he uttered. When battling a point that told against his case, he skillfully led the jury to a quiet corner, and, after a few moments of silent thought, painting it in colors of his own, and fixing the attention on his own interpretation. His quick eye detected at once a point gained, and he followed up a home-thrust till he was sure of his man.

During his address to the jury, he gave proof of his great eloquence, and language, and wit, and poesy. He held his audience spellbound. He pointed out from books bearing on the matter of communication, told stories of cases of disorder that were serious or fatal in their issues. Throughout his long address, the same stillness pervaded the courtroom, crowded to its utmost capacity.

GOETHE'S FATHER AND MOTHER.

From Grimm's Life and Times of Goethe.

Goethe's life was drawn from his experiences and the observation of his own nature, intermingled with the incidents of his life in a family of the "Faint," to which he comes back again in a series of his writings, open to the eyes of his parents, written in reference to his father: "Am I then destined by fate to become so narrow-minded?" And later he must have discovered in himself many of the peculiar traits of his father. The habit of recording everything he said and did, and distressing details, too, to speak, was a mark of his mother's temperance and strictness. There could be no more natural than Divine Life attended it. There was also an apprehension of "running too fast." Friends were frequently "moved," but it is a mistake to suppose that they always heeded the movement, which might indeed come of the Enemy. The great point was to be sure, that the life was often a very difficult one.

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